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Language and Culture Intertwinement in Music

An effort to develop intercultural language (and notation) in Music

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Abstract: In today's society, arts, music, and education, are strongly rooted in "Cultural Diversity" and "Intercultural Dialogue." Effective international collaboration requires that we be more sensitive and aware of the unique aspects of other cultures, and people from other cultures need to be sensitive to ours. However, cultures and our relationship to them are continually changing. This article investigates current issues linked to multicultural environments, languages, and social differences with respect to artistic and, in particular, musical collaboration; it includes a discussion of problems related to terminology and artistic creation, and attempts to highlight efforts to enhance its theory and practice.

Introduction

Language is intertwined with culture. In his essay "Utterer's Meaning and Intention," Grice establishes that an essential feature of most human communication, encompassing both verbal and non-verbal forms, is the expression and recognition of intentions (Grice, 1969) [1]. Music performance presents a clear example and application of both verbal and non-verbal communication. Musicians rely on using predetermined symbols that are inherent to one's music culture and tradition. For example, a conductor directing an orchestra performing Western symphonic music uses pre-established signs to lead the performers and help them know when to start and stop in time, or play faster or slower.

Samovar and Porter present communication as a process "in which one person intentionally encodes and transmits a message through a channel to an intended audience (receivers) in order to induce a particular attitude or behavior" (Samovar, Porter & Jain, 1981, p. 13) [2]. When two people communicate, they interact with and through symbols that exist within a specific culture and tradition, and create and interpret meanings" (Wood, 2004, pp. 28-29)[3]. By interpreting these symbols, people can understand each other. Symbols are invented and re-invented by cultures, and for most cases, understanding specific symbols implies knowing and understanding the culture and tradition they come from. Thus, when we use symbols to communicate, we assume that others share our system of symbols. Unfortunately, symbols are abstract, culturally connected, arbitrary, and often ambiguous representations. A communication is an intercultural social performance with two actors, the hearer (or the interpreter) and the perceiver. It is a cooperative

principle where both parts are motivated to understand and make themselves understood (Walker, 2000).[4]

Intercultural (mis)communication has a central place within Intercultural Communication studies; there are many examples, anecdotes, or personal experiences of cross-cultural misunderstandings. Cultural difference is one essential reason that might result in cross-cultural misunderstandings. Major findings on the causes of misunderstandings include the discrepancies in communication styles, cultural values, and interpersonal relationship orientations. The difference in communication style is recognized as a primary cause for misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication. The concept of “High Context” versus “Low Context” Communication is proposed by anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1976). On one hand, communication processes in High Context Communication (HCC) society, also referred to as “collectivism,” is embedded. On the other hand, communication in Low Context Communication, referred to as “individualism,” assumes little background information in common and codes and transmits much information. Cultural diversity can be simply separated into two groups: “individualism” or “collectivism.” According to studies carried out by Hofstede (Erdman, 2017)[5], Triandis (1988 & 1995) [6][7], and Bhawuk (1996) [8], individual cultures emphasize individual goals and careers, whereas collectivistic cultures tend to emphasize group goals. Of course, within the medium of music we are very interested about these definitions and the distinction we can make between these group behaviors, from soloists to chamber ensembles.

Notating music for groups that are culturally connected implies a set of rules and symbols that need to be predefined, understood and agreed upon. However, musical notation appears in many different guises. Differences exist not only between classical and traditional music but also, in many cultures, between music fixed by notation and improvisation (i.e., music created spontaneously, and usually without notation); music improvisation often plays a significant function in a musical performance. In order to create a system of music notation that embraces intercultural dialogue through music, then, each of these aspects must be considered.

Notation systems evolve along with the music they serve. (Bent, 2018)[9] They also reflect the underlying aesthetics of their cultural milieu. Whilst staff notation is well equipped for Western notation, it fails to transcribe a certain form of traditional music where the idea of pitch is non-existent, or when the music focuses on the gradual increase or decrease of volume or timbre. The Western system of proportional note values quickly finds its limitation when dealing with fine fluctuations of value; such limitations can be found in the transcriptions of Serbo-Croatian and Romanian folk song by Hungarian composer Béla Bartók (Bruggeman, 2013) [10]. These works contain an absence of strophes, the universal appearance of

eight or seven syllable lines and the existence of rhymed couplets, which are frequently interrupted by groups of three, four, or more rhythmic or arrhythmic lines (Bartok, 1968) [11]. To translate these occurrences in traditional music, researchers and transcribers devised various graphic notations, including the introduction of a graph with a drawn curve of the pitch against time. Similar translations were carried out in other cultures, resulting in non-European notation being divided into two categories: an alphanumerical symbol system (alphabet or numerical) and a graphic system.

Alphabet symbols appear in the Middle East, Europe, and India. The use of letters is used to define tones and organise them. Alphabetical notations are among the most ancient musical scripts and first appeared in Greece, where they were using an archaic alphabet. Many similar systems appeared in the Middle Ages giving its name to the modern scale (from A to G). The use of numbers to notate pitches and music is less common. A modern Javanese system uses numbers 1-7 in order to notate pitches, and a similar five-note system exists in Bali. Modern Japanese notation for the shamisen also uses numbers ranging from 1 to 7 for the diatonic scale, with number 7 being the lowest note; modern China also has a similar system for publishing popular and traditional pieces of music.

Graphic notation encompasses all notation that would not be based on alphanumerical symbols. However, there is a distinction between the symbol systems established over centuries, which is now part of the music theory lexicon, and between graphical notation systems that attempt to translate more complex musical ideas. Both traditional and contemporary systems are similar, but they use abstract symbols, images, and text, to convey meaning to the performers. Traditional notation tends to be linear and rigid, generally focusing on the micro-organization of the music. Whereas modern graphic notation is more open, offering flexibility, allowing the performer greater freedom to focus on the macro-organization of the music.

In his thesis *“Exploring the Boundaries of Improvisation and Composition”*, Malcolm Atkins (2010)[12] concluded that graphic and alphanumerical scores do not share classical notation limitations (where there is little opportunity to develop an individual voice), as they allow performers to include their own “vocabulary” within constraints, which can give direction to ensemble playing, but which do not constrain the expression of the players. In these cases, compositional limitations are inherent in that the outcome is far more dependent on the integrity of the players (Atkins, 2010) [13]. In complete agreement with Atkins’ statement, and in an attempt to include aspects of music notation common to most traditions and cultures, I created a set of pieces using graphical notation that explore the bound-

aries of improvisation and composition, verbal and non-verbal communication systems, and attempts to emphasize notions of intercultural dialogue, communication, and miscommunication.

In this music, graphical notation and controlled improvisation are employed. It is a system where the formal organisation is established using graphical elements, but where musicians are free to organise music at the micro-level, in order to encourage each musician to perform freely and with confidence. Traditional musicians are known to use notated music as a guide, where interpretation and improvisation are important. The composition is built upon the idea that an audience will hear a structure rather than individual and independent items such as musical notes, phrasing, and accents. Just as individuals cannot remember each and every word of a conversation, yet are able to retain the meaning of the conversation and exchange, most audiences will not remember each and every note of a composition - instead, they retain the overall idea and feeling. This newly created notation system defines a formal organization that can be altered melodically and harmonically. The result procures an interesting experience where the audience will, through two performances, recognize the piece as using a similar structure even if the micro-organization (notes, playing, harmony) differs. Jeanne Bamberger, Professor Emerita of Music and Urban Education Music and Theatre Arts at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, argues that “*Hearing is a performance*” (Bamberger, 1987) [14]. She continues to develop her ideas in a way that the “hearer” seems to find in the music, is a process of instant personal problems solving - an active process of sense-making something like that evoked by the comment of the painter, Ben Shahn:

... painting is both creative and responsive. It is an intently communicative affair between the painter and his painting, a conversation back and forth, the painting telling the painter even as it receives its shape and form (Shahn, 1992) [15]

The Idea exposed by Bamberger could not be closer to my treatment of graphical representation of a form, when, through her discussion with imaginary students Met and Mot, she simplifies music notation of Beethoven's *Minuet in E-flat* (WoO 10/3) using graphical notation to uncover Beethoven's formal organization. Furthermore, in a time of radical change, where contemporary music became an intellectual challenge, including many technical and physical complexities (Nyman, 1980) [16], the use of graphical notation answers two important needs: firstly, a need for composers to present complex ideas in a more simplistic manner; and second, a need for composers to empower the performer with enhanced decision-making within the composition and performance processes. Graphical notation, which is based on pre-established visual signs, is created to be accepted by all cultures and traditions, making this communication unique by being transcultural and

naturally accessible to all musicians. The symbols chosen depict straightforward musical events, such as rising and descending sounds, vibrato, and performance duration, which can be quickly understood by musicians of different cultures and traditions.

When I was based in Beijing, China, I often worked with musicians from different musical backgrounds and styles, including classical, traditional, jazz and pop. From 2008, I developed graphical music notation elements to organize form and structure, and defined performance systems that communicated directions to the performing musicians as well as empowering them with extensive options for improvisation and freedom of interpretation. *Trio* was the first piece I created using these new ideas; it attempted to create a musical intercultural dialogue within a small group consisting of classical (clarinet and cello) and jazz (saxophone) musicians. Highly influenced by Chinese language, tone color, and language structure, the piece uses a simplistic graphical system depicting tone variation, such as ascending and descending tones, vibrato, glissandi, and tempo modulation (see Figure 1).

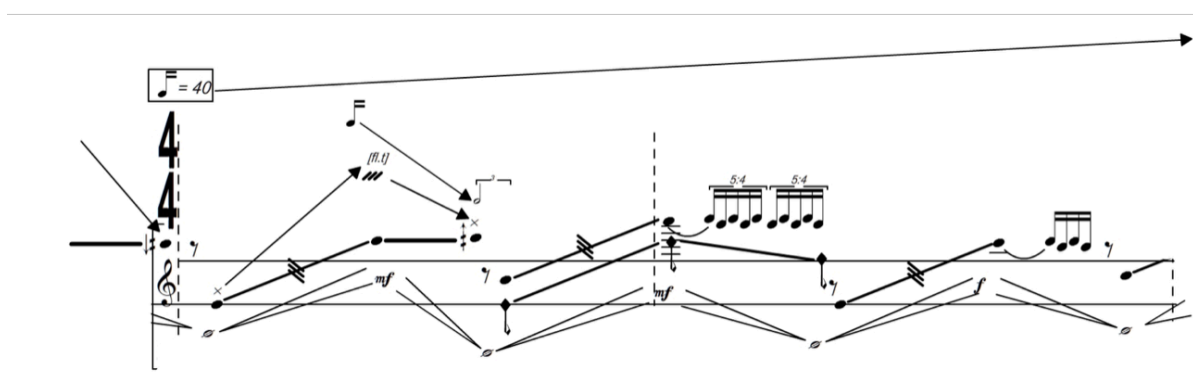


Fig1: *Trio*, for Clarinet, Cello and Saxophone (Page 10)

My second string quartet was my next attempt to find solutions to several existing compositional problems: first, to develop a musical intercultural dialogue between the East and the West; second, to identify and adopt new instrumental techniques influenced by Chinese playing techniques; third, to develop the sonic possibilities of the ensemble; fourth, to investigate methods of formal organization along the dichotomy of fixed notation versus pure improvisation; and finally, to attempt to inject the classical chamber music genre with a spirit of renewal. This composition set out to establish a new musical language, while paying its respects to the different traditions it was constructed from. The erhu leads the piece by distributing musical elements such as rhythms, pitches, or gestures from its own culture on to the rest of the ensemble. Its intention is not just to “borrow” from the Chinese tradition, but also to adapt a traditional form by incorporating it into a modern

aesthetic, trying to present one possible approach to enhance cross-cultural interaction.

Fig 2: Music and culture Diplomacy Program (Erhu and 2 Violins) (Page 7)

The image displays a musical score for three instruments: Erhu, Violin I, and Violin II. The score is organized into four measures, separated by vertical dashed lines. Each measure contains musical notation for all three instruments. The Erhu staff is at the top, Violin I in the middle, and Violin II at the bottom. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings. Specific markings include 'Normal speed' and '90' (likely indicating a tempo or dynamic change). The Violin I staff has a large blacked-out section in the first measure. The Violin II staff has a '9' marking in the first measure. The Erhu staff has a '7' marking in the second measure. The Violin I staff has a '7' marking in the third measure. The Violin II staff has a '9' marking in the third measure. The Erhu staff has a '7' marking in the fourth measure. The Violin I staff has a '7' marking in the fourth measure. The Violin II staff has a '9' marking in the fourth measure.

Following this successful experience, I decided expand my to work with multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue in music composition and performance. It is important to give a clear definition of “culture diversity” and “intercultural dialogue.” The definition of culture has long been complex as the term is used in a variety of ways; the term sub-culture is broadly used to refer to minority cultures within a larger dominant culture. Culture diversity often refers to co-existing sub-groups that adopt different behaviors, traditions, and customs. In 2001, the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity was adopted and elevates cultural diversity to the rank of a common heritage of humanity (UNESCO, 2002) [17]. The declaration promotes the principle that “culture takes diverse forms across time and space,” emphasizes the understanding of moving from cultural diversity to cultural pluralism, and delineates cultural diversity as a factor in development. Through the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, UNESCO holds firmly to the view that full and unqualified recognition of cultural diversity strengthens the universality of sub-culture recognition and future. Culture diversity is a large concept that can apply and be used in areas as different as education, business, social iteration, organizations, and especially art and music. It became the main focus of many types of research and discussions and disagreement. For example, in their book *Multicultural Education, Issues and Perspective*, James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks state that “Multicultural education is an important part of a needed reform in education in order to improve its quality.” (Banks 1989)[18] Dr. Geneva Gay, in *Multicultural Education for All Disciplines*, strongly criticized the need

and effect of multiculturalism in education. Cultural diversity in the arts is also a subject of great dissonance among researchers and artists. (Gay, 2003) [19]

Enhancing Intercultural Dialogue Through Paralanguage

Upon reviewing the research and findings of Albert Mehrabian, Emeritus Professor of Psychology (UCLA), I developed several approaches to increase the use of body language and expression towards enhancing communication within an ensemble; and, in turn, towards enhancing communication between the ensemble and audience. The goal is to make musical performance easier to understand, more dramatic, and more theatrical.

According to Mehrabian(1981) [20], three elements account for an individual's liking of a personal message with respect to feelings or emotion communicated: words account for only 7%, tone of voice accounts for 38%; most significant, body language, accounts for 55%. Mehrabian concluded that the receiver trusts the predominant form of communication, body language, which is non-verbal (55%) [21] rather than the literal meaning of the words (7%). Some aspects of Mehrabian's research was very interesting when applied to music composition and its performance, where the use of particular body language or facial expression carried out different meaning than specific musical content. Building on this idea that paralanguage (the nonlexical component of communication by speech such as intonation, pitch, and speed of speaking, gesture, and facial expression) can be used to convey a more meaningful to the audience, a composition called *The Whispering Tree* was presented at the Beijing Musicacoustica Festival (2015). The instrumentation of *The Whispering Tree* consisted of Asian and Western instruments; and its score, written using graphic notation, also gave instructions in the use of paralanguage to be employed in performance in order to convey a clearer and stronger message to the audience.

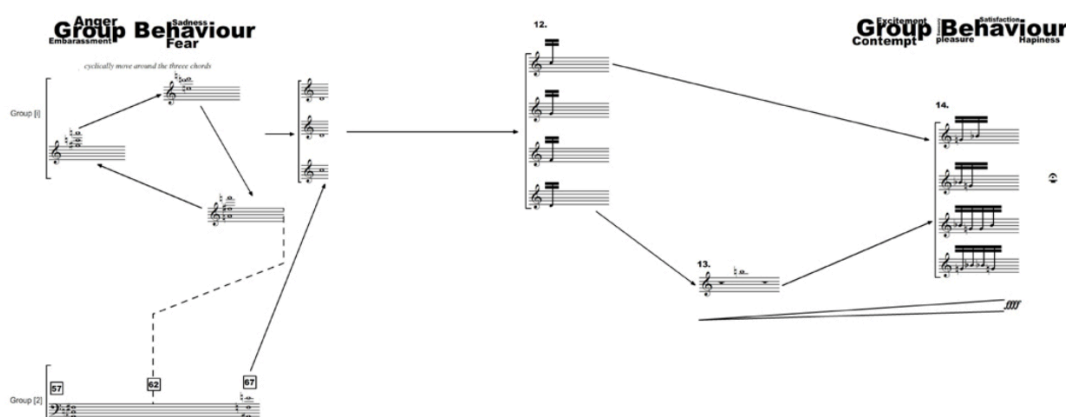


Fig3: Example of the use in Body language for music composition

It is important to emphasize that the composer's intent in *The Whispering Tree* is to extend and heighten the communication of musical experience within an intercultural setting. Its goal is to surmount the potential limitations posed by multicultural audiences, performers, and instrumentation, and to minimize communication issues posed invoking more than one musical tradition at the same time.

Multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue in music

Multiculturalism is a concept that has been present for centuries, even if not specifically accounted for in the written documents of the past. The commingling of several cultures or ethnic groups within a society offers composers and artists exposure to inspiring materials, the opportunity to renew their creative languages, and the development of new ideas.

Mozart's use of Turkish themes in his *Rondo Alla Turca* (Turkish March) Piano Sonata No. 11, his last Violin Concerto No. 5, often referred to as "The Turkish," or in his "Turkish" opera *Il Seraglio*, can be considered early examples of multiculturalism in music history. One could argue that the proximity of the Ottoman minorities meant that Turkish subculture was easily reachable for Mozart and his contemporaries. French classical and modern composers were also fascinated by Spanish music and culture. Trying to break from Romanticism, both Debussy and Ravel tried to develop a new musical system. Debussy, who was previously inspired by his discovery of Javanese Gamelan music at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, led him to develop new compositional techniques used in later pieces such as "Pagodes" from *Estampes*, the "Prélude" from *Pour Le Piano*, or "Poissons d'Or" from *Images II*.

Some works of Maurice Ravel are among the best examples of multicultural inclusion, the influence of jazz music can be heard in his G-major Piano Concerto, the influence of Jewish music in his "Deux Mélodies Hébraïques (Kaddish and L'Énigme éternelle)," Greek music in his *Cinq Mélodies Populaires Grecques*, music from Madagascar in his *Chansons Madécasses*, and popular music with *Chants Populaires*, which references Spanish, French, Italian, Hebrew, and Scottish folk songs. Early examples can also be found in the works of German composer Carl Maria von Weber, who composed his *Turandot Princess of China Overture* in 1804, a composition inspired by a "Chinese air" Weber found in the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Complete Dictionary of Music* (1768). The folk song was brought from China by French Jesuit missionary Joseph-Marie Amiot and published in the *Description Géographique, Historique, Chronologique, Politique, Et Physique de l'Empire de la Chine Et de la Tartarie Chinoise* (Du Halde, 1736) [22]. In his work *Puccini and the Music Boxes* (Sheppard, 2015) [23], Musicologist W. Anthony Sheppard developed the assumption that Puccini based two themes from *Madama But-*

terfly on Chinese melodies coming from a Swiss music box. Specific moments in the opera indicate that Puccini was aware of the original titles of these tunes. Furthermore, as early as 1852, Hector Berlioz, in *À Travers Chants XX Mœurs musicales de la Chine*, developed an analysis of the differences between China and the West on the position of music and culture within the society. (Berlioz, 1862) [24]

In contemporary classical music, the exchange between composers, performers, and artists from different cultures has never been stronger. At this level of artistic exchange, one hopes that cross-fertilization is not a mere superficial collage of styles or, even less, an amalgamation of disparate cultures linked through musical tourism. Ethnomusicologist Steven Feld argues that multiculturalism in music should be “a voyage of discovery, a sonic experience of contact, an auditory deflowering that penetrates the harmony of difference.” (Feld, 2000)[25] In other words, the musician should be free to use, manipulate, and transform sound and music without barriers. However, this does pose philosophical questions concerning *what is* the respectful use of musical traditions toward connecting different cultures and society. An example of the use of Eastern influence in (modern) music can be found in the work of American composer Harry Partch, who was born to parents who had served as missionaries in China. (Partch, 1979) [26] Before sleeping, Partch’s mother sang to him Chinese lullabies, which he later referenced in his work *Seventeen Lyrics by Li Po* based on translations of Li Bai’s poetry. In this work, Partch broke with Western European tradition and forged a new music based on a more primal, corporeal, integration of the elements of speech, rhythm, and performance, using the intrinsic music found in the spoken word, the principles of acoustic resonance, and just-intonation. Borrowing from the intonation systems of the ancient Greeks, Partch created a scale of 43-tones per octave, enabling him, in part, to capture the nuances of speech in his music and to forge what some might call a “purer” harmony. (Gilmore, 1992) [27]

Nanning-based American composer Michael Edgerton also research and developed several new approaches towards merging Chinese and Western aesthetics in his composition:

In *Vivacity of the Human Voice*, for solo ehru (2017), the ehru is used to imitate the vivacity of the human voice... [The composition] is a meditation on diversity and the roiling of coexistence. In this piece disparate components from the East and West do not suggest a transcendent unification; rather, rhetorical devices such as “tiaogong” [跳弓] or “Schleifer” [a musical ornament, also known as a “slide” in English] become something else - no longer artifacts presuming cultural retention, but rather discourse to a risky modernism. [28]

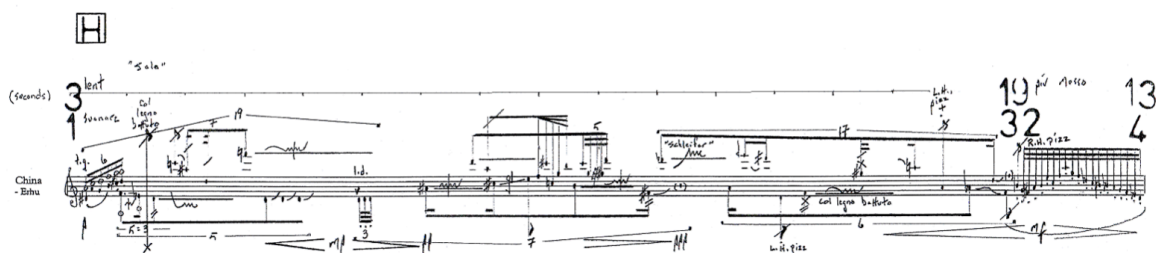


Fig4: Michael Edgerton's *Vivacity of the Human Voice, for solo ehru* (2017)

As early as 1999, Boston-based composer Anthony Paul De Ritis was invited by Professor Zhang Boyu to discuss his work *Plum Blossoms* at the Central Conservatory of Music. *Plum Blossoms* is an electroacoustic work based on sampled recordings of the Chinese pipa as played by pipa virtuoso, Min Xiao-Fen, that was being presented at the 1999 International Computer Music Conference (ICMC). There, De Ritis met Professor Zhang, who invited De Ritis to present *Plum Blossoms* to his students. In his essay contributed to the book *Musicking the Soul* (published by the Central Conservatory of Music Press in 2018), De Ritis reflected this cultural exchange experience, stating that it was an:

...opportunity for discussion, for dialogue between a Western composer and some of the brightest young Chinese musicians of that time. Music was the means by which learning about one another was taking place, and it was the first time I witnessed Professor Zhang Boyu's curiosity, perception, and willingness to engage in dialogue so that we could learn from one another. And certainly, for me, the seeds of self-discovery and eventually cultural diplomacy were sown, as was the beginning of my twenty-year engagement with China. (De Ritis, 2018) [29]

Marc Battier, Emeritus Professor of Musicology at the University of Paris-Sorbonne, and founder of the Electroacoustic Music Studies Asia Network (EMSAN), stated that De Ritis's music "sounds like a successful synthesis of East and West." (De Ritis, 2018) [30]

In further pursuit of an East-West intercultural dialogue, De Ritis created *Ping-Pong*, a Concerto for Pipa and Chinese Orchestra; a work intended to bring Eastern and Western culture together. "Diplomacy," the third movement of this three movement composition, references:

...“ping-pong diplomacy,” the historical opening between the United States and People's Republic of China in the early 1970s, and its goodwill exchange of table tennis players that marked a thaw in Sino-American relations, and paved the way for a visit to Beijing by President Richard Nixon. (De Ritis, 2018) [31]

De Ritis would later compose his *Melody for Peace* written for both Western orchestra and a large ensemble of non-Western indigenous instruments representing over 20 countries. Commissioned by the “Melody for Dialogue Among Civilizations

Association” (MDACA), *Melody for Peace* was premiered at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on November 26, 2007, at the end of a day-long symposium titled “Music as a Means of Intercultural Dialogue,” an event structured around three sessions: 1., “The dynamics of music and cultural expressions,” examined the role that traditional communities could play in the safekeeping of their music and the promotion of cultural diversity; 2., “Impact of globalization (and commerce) on music as an intangible heritage,” debated how, in a globalizing world, musical expressions could be protected and promoted; and 3., “How does music further communication?” which raised questions on whether music, which forms part of cultural identities, can improve understanding of these very identities. (Unesco, 2007) [32]

In 2016, in an effort to merge contemporary aesthetics as well as to create a bridge between tradition and modernism, French composer Frederic Durieux composed and premiered his work *Longue Distance*, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the death of German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. The piece, written for clarinet (and bass clarinet) and erhu, was performed as part of “Leibniz’s Harmonies 2016,” an International Composition Competition celebrating Leibniz’s metaphysics of harmony. (Durieux, 2016) [33] The title of the piece refers to “distances” between the two instruments in terms of temporal, physical, social, cultural, musical register (i.e., pitch “height,” the two instruments are often presented with one playing very low pitches while the pitch range of the other is very high, as seen in Figure 6).

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Clarinette (top staff) and Ehu (bottom staff). The Clarinette part is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/8. It starts at measure 134. The Ehu part is written in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/8. The score is divided into three measures. In the first measure, the Clarinette plays a single note (F#4) and the Ehu plays a series of notes (F#3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4) marked with *mf > p*. In the second measure, the Clarinette plays a triplet of notes (F#4, G4, A4) and the Ehu plays a series of notes (F#3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4) marked with *p, sempre* and *(sim.)*. In the third measure, the Clarinette plays a triplet of notes (F#4, G4, A4) and the Ehu plays a series of notes (F#3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4) marked with *mp sfz* and *sfz*. The score is marked with *mf > p*, *p, sempre*, *(sim.)*, *mp sfz*, and *sfz*.

Fig5: example of register differences in Frederic Durieux’ “Longue Distance”, for clarinet (and bass clarinet) and ehru (2016)

Durieux explains that:

The composition is mimicking a theatre stage where two characters speak a language that neither really dominates. They want to communicate and exchange with each other. They do it sometimes, but not always. Yet it is from this otherness that something unique appears and happens. (Durieux, 2016)[34]

Durieux believes that Western music has always tried to build a homogeneous sound space, where its sound had to be perfect and complete. Such a model for musical sound was successful for a long time; but, since the beginning of the 20th century, composers' attempts have failed on many sides. Now, he claims, such a model is now believed by many to be impossible. There is a strong belief among many contemporary composers, and shared by Durieux, that the "space" between musical notes unfolds in a relative sound world where noise and heterogeneity are part of the musical language. Asian tradition brings us the belief that no one note can be pure, and that noise is part of the sound itself. The spaces between musical notes contain noise, and breath, and other sounds that "accompany" the music, and thereby giving it life. In his work *Longue Distance*, Durieux attempts to mix two cultures and traditions in order to build a new space for sound and music.

Musical diversity and Inclusion

Since 2008, in collaboration with the TIMI Modern Music Ensemble, I have been working with Chinese and Western musicians alike, experimenting with intercultural instrumentation and the influence of modern music and the European tradition. In 2009, as part of the "Music and Cultural Diplomacy" symposium, hosted by Northeastern University, (De Ritis, 2008) [35] I was invited to present my research in the area of intercultural dialogue as a mean for cultural diplomacy. Anthony Paul De Ritis, then, Professor and Chair of Northeastern's Music Department, stated that the goals of the symposium was to "foster dialogue about music's ability to unite people as citizens of the world" and "to bring together key international players, as well as those on the national scene, who share a belief that music can be used as a force for mutual understanding and peace between cultures." ((De Ritis, 2008) [36])

My approach to musical diversity on this occasion was to offer a new work for string instruments from Asia and Europe motivated by the creation of new music and sound. One of the most exciting aspects of this composition was to transform the standard string quartet medium (2 violins, viola, and cello) into a string quintet; i.e., string quartet with Chinese erhu. The erhu is a two-stringed bowed Chinese musical instrument in which the bow is placed between the string and the body. Contrary to Western string instruments, its sound is made by pulling the bow on the strings, rather than pushing. The addition of the erhu extended and enriched the sounds of the string quartet.

Fig6: example of communication and exchange as present on the “Music and culture Diplomacy Program” (Erhu and 2 Violins) (Page 7)

As for resident of Asia for nearly 10 years, living in China and working with Chinese musicians, my curiosity to work with other Asian instruments and cultures evolved. This includes my strong friendship with South Korean performing artist Gamin Kang, who commissioned me for a new piece for Saenghwang (a free reed mouth organ derived from the Chinese sheng) and Electronics. This composition is one of many of my intercultural works to be recycled, and regrouped under the name *Pal-eum (Eight Tones)*. (GAMIN, 2009)[37] In Chinese, Pal-eum or ba yin (八音) refers to the oldest and most highly developed of all known musical systems that organizes both vocal and instrumental sound. The composition addresses intercultural dialogue between Chinese and South Korean musical traditions, and European aesthetics.

This piece, titled *12 over 8*, uses a twelve-tone pitch series as a melodic and harmonic cell, while creating sounds with timbre close to one of the Chinese eight sounds classification: hide or leather, metal, wood, gourd, stone, silk, clay and bamboo. (Yeh, 2005) [38] *12 over 8* is organized into eight sections, with each section focused on a specific timbre, using a traditional and modern technique. A large part of the composition relies upon the use of improvisation and choice making within a strictly organized overall form that follows a non-linear structure. The use of improvisation employed in *12 over 8* is consistent with the Korea’s long musical tradition. (Complex and well-established improvisation systems can be found in South Korean folk music known as “minsog’ak,” “sanjo,” and “sinawi,” (Choi, 2006) [39] which emerged from a ritual shamanistic music (muak) originating from Cholla Province. The music of South Korea is unique in Asia as it presents examples

of structurally unpredictable music, where the sanjo or sinawi musician can create an extensive extemporization in performances that may become spontaneous and unpredictable, leaving compositional structure behind.¹ The style of improvisation found in sinawi performance has strong similarities with the fixed-motif style of composition one can find in Terry Riley's seminal work *In C*. (Kim, 1984) [40] The "sanjo" style, meaning "scattered melodies," is a form of improvised instrumental solo music whose structure and performance practice is similar to those found in Indian raga, Arab "maqamaat," Persian "dastgah," and jazz systems. (Lee, 1987) [41] Studying South Korean traditional music teaches us that there is already an intercultural dialogue across Asian cultures that should be enough to show us that multicultural art forms are not novelty, and should be encouraged. The composition *12 over 8* references many musical traditions and cultures (China, South Korea, Japan, Europe, South and North America) in order to broaden its sonic possibilities and offers a solution concerning the integrating of cultures and traditions in music creation

Conclusion

Language, culture, and tradition are interconnected and dependent upon one another. As language is formed and evolves with culture, culture is equally influenced and impacted by language. Language in all its forms (verbal and non verbal) is not just an expression and result of history or heritage; it is also a component of culture that makes it unique. With ever-growing and hastening movement of populations, modern society has evolved interculturally, impacting language and traditions. Intercultural dialogue is not only crucial in preventing and ending conflicts; it can also promote reconciliation and introduce moderate voices into polarized debates. In art (and music) settings, intercultural dialogue offers the promise of promoting international dialogue towards developing understanding, respect, international traditions, and culture. Introducing the notion of language in all its forms, culture and tradition, allows artists to develop a dialogue with no borders, and towards the creation of new ideas that encompass all traditions and cultures while promoting cultural diversity. Intercultural settings also open new possibilities in music composition and performance as well as challenges which require composers to be imaginative and invent new system to compose, notate and perform music that include different cultures and tradition. One of the solutions I successfully implemented consist in understanding symbols that are presented in traditions and cultures and build a new notation system in order to be able to make sense classical, traditional and contemporary musicians.

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